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PRACTICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Editorial Remarks

Do you agree with everything said by the authors of our articles? Would you like to comment on or elaborate on some point made by one of the authors? Do you have some other thought, observation, or experience you would like to share with the readers of this paper? If so, please do something about it!

As soon as someone responds we will initiate the discussion and correspondence section. You are invited to make this paper the forum for the friendly and informal exchange of ideas and opinions and the sharing of experiences. When you write be sure to let us know that the letter is for publication and which parts of it are for publication. If it will take too much space for you to present your argument or comment in a letter, let us know what your idea is and we may ask you to develop it into an article for us. Please do write. Remember, that this is not meant to be a megaphone through which we announce our conclusions, but a medium by which we can share not only our opinions and experiences but also the questions and problems which puzzle us.

Please continue to let us know of individuals, libraries, schools, etc. which might be interested in receiving Practical Anthropology. We are glad for the many names we have already received from you. The letter inviting subscriptions to Practical Anthropology has gone out to approximately 300 persons.

Regarding the letter, there is a correction to be made. The subscription is for six issues in the year 1954, not 1953-54 as stated. The two experimental issues are free of charge to all who receive them. We still have a few copies of each issue left, and will continue to send them as they are requested.

Is there anyone among you who attended the American Anthropological Association meeting in Tucson, Arizona in December? If you did, we'd like to have a report from you on any aspects of the meetings which were of

special interest to us as Christians. Let us know.

So far this periodical may sound a little like an organ of the anthropology department at Wheaton. Actually we want as many as possible who are interested in anthropology and Christianity to participate in every way. Most of the names we started with were those of anthropology graduates of Wheaton for we here naturally know about these people and their activities. Please let us know of others. This venture is for all Christians who are interested in anthropology.

A FIELD METHOD: THE CULTURE-PERSONALITY APPROACH

George R. Horner

In a recent issue of Practical Anthropology Mrs. Reyburn gave us a general approach in field methods for the Christian anthropologist in her study of "Applied Anthropology among the Sierra Quechua of Ecuador." This study goes one step deeper in that it is a study in motivations.

In a presidential address written when Rev. Edwin W. Smith, author of The Golden Stool, became the first missionary to be elected president of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Rev. Smith wrote these very practical words: ".... it is an obvious and elementary maxim that if you are to teach Jack arithmetic you must know Jack as well as arithmetic!" How much more necessary, we may add, that if you are going to bring God's plan of salvation to Mvondo, you should have experienced salvation and you should know Mvondo. The catch is, of course, to know Mvondo, who can represent any person anywhere in the non-Christian world.

"To know" brings up the problem of approach, and getting to know either Jack or Mvondo is a problem of approach. Our first response to a stranger from another culture is intuitional, and our intuition is probably based upon the sum total of our experiences, prejudices, attitudes and understanding of that person and his culture. In the past, as today, our biases account for most of our attitude toward such a stranger. These are real and unreal emotional attitudes, snap judgements as well as learned judgements based upon false premises. If our approach is based upon any of these or other false premises we may be assured that our work will be unfruitful and that we are in danger of not doing the very thing we set out to do -- to bring God's plan of salvation to Mvondo or to teach Mvondo to apply his experience of salvation. Acting upon false premises of

the known or unknown variety represents the greatest hindrance to missionaries in doing what they believe is God's will and true missionary work.

We missionaries are not the only ones who work or who have worked under false premises. Scientists who consider non-Western peoples in social, biological and mental stages of evolution are just as wrong. The darkness of a skin, the extra tubercule on a bone, was too often wrongly considered as indicative of a low mental or physical state. Some theologians borrowed the idea of evolution according to skin color and theologically measured or determined the presence or lack of a soul in a man. The lighter the skin color the more soul; the darker the skin color the less soul a man possessed, it was thought. The blackest man had no soul at all. This led, in the field of economics, to the imperialistic subjugation of many native peoples in the past three centuries; a mistake in judgement for which we are paying today in Africa as well as other parts of the world.

Modern American anthropology went through such a period before the present trend toward considering anthropology as an applied or practical human science. There are, to be sure, certain anthropologists who dislike this emphasis but the majority follow the present trend in considering any man, any society and any culture on its own merits without any evolutionary bias. A number of anthropologists have recognized the value of the study techniques of the psychologists and, with them, try to understand the workings of the deeper values of man, society and culture. These investigators are sometimes called cultural psychologists, for they use the culture-personality approach. There is one group which assumes that childhood experiences are the moulders of culture, the kind of culture and the form a culture will take. At the same time it assumes that the individuals composing a culture are carriers of that culture from generation to generation. This school of thought tries to understand the interrelationships between an individual and his cultural milieu. For example, a Hottentot child growing up in American or Western culture would, upon reaching adulthood, be an American in every way but physically. Likewise an American child of white

parentage placed in a Hottentot village, would upon reaching adulthood, be a Hottentot in all of his cultural relationships and behavior.

At best, for us, it is a working hypothesis. The culture-personality approach assumes that culture takes a newly-born personality and, in time and through childhood experiences, moulds this individual into the behavior pattern of the culture. This moulding technique includes child-training, disciplines or lack of them, informal and formal education, cultural goals, ethics, myths, folktales, forms of social control, beliefs, taboos, attitudes, "ideal" behavior, fears, magical concepts -- everything which can be called a survival system or a way which preserves life and allows the continuity of the culture pattern.

This idea of cultural determinism does not in any way (or needn't) infringe upon the Biblical concept of man, God's plan of salvation or the belief that the Holy Spirit can (and often does) change the life of an individual. In fact, it supports the claim that without God man cannot even choose good! Mans' relation to God remains fundamentally the same in whatever culture he is clothed.

The culture-personality approach makes certain basic working assumptions about all human beings and all cultures:

1. That at birth all human beings are made up of the same physical, psychological and mental capabilities and potentialities.
2. That each culture takes these human capabilities and bends or moulds them to fit the accepted pattern or matrix of that society and culture.
3. That which we observe in either a culture, or an individual belonging to it, is a projection or outward manifestation of the kind of culture goals of a particular culture. These manifestations come from the basic culture core. This core gives meaning to life, a will to live, and otherwise provides the dynamic and motivations of a culture and those who live in it.

What one tries to do on the field, following the above premises, is to discover basic culture goals, human

motivations, the reality system, social structure and system of relationships, religious beliefs and other cultural symbols. He finds what appear to be analagous cultural forms and learns the particular meaning a culture gives to them. For example, is dress a means of protection, sign of Christianity or a symbol of wealth and status, etc?

After completing a study of Bulu culture, a French Camerounian tribe in West Africa,and following the above premises, I came to the following conclusions:

1. That wealth goals are the strongest motivators of Bulu behavior.
2. That these goals are pre-Christian and were formerly related to the after-life goals of wealth and status in the underground villages of deceased ancestors.
3. That the coming of Christianity and westernization have solidified rather than weakened these goals by providing a quicker technique of realizing wealth even though the older concepts of after-life status in the underground villages are no longer believed.

We also came to certain tentative conclusions relating to the personality structure of the Bulu. These are:

1. That there is a strong sense of dependency.
2. That there is a basic fear complex as a result of childhood training.
3. That the elements of this fear complex (black magic, fear of the night, etc.) are projections of an insecure personality system and structure which, in part, is a result of childhood experiences. (Certain aspects of personality structure may be inherited).

With these working conclusions we begin to know a little about Mvondo and his culture. At least we know something about his culture's goals, motivations and personality structure. Now to give an illustration of its applicability.

One of the basic aims of Christian missions is to train native or national Christian leaders. (The question of the validity of leaders at all and their position in their society should be a subject of anthropo-

logical study before they are imposed upon an unsuspecting society). Leaders, in our Western use of the term, should show creative ability, independent judgements, initiative, etc. The Bulu, who have been Christians for over 60 years have yet to produce a single leader in our meaning of the term. Yet there are many who seem to be leaders and who are called leaders because of their singular ability to imitate and to follow a given program.

The Bulu, if any one of their society should develop leadership abilities, would probably say that such a person is filled with an evil spirit (evu), and they would discourage the ascendency of such an individual if he tried to rise above the level of his village brothers. The Bulu say that only a wealthy man can gain status and rank in the eyes of the villagers. It is the fulfillment of wealth-goals which makes a leader in the cultural system of these people.

Should the idea of training leaders be followed to its logical conclusion it would mean that the entire childhood training would have to be altered so that insecurity, instability and other fears would be done away with. This is a big order which no one is ready to attempt. Pastors, catechists and evangelists are recognized leaders, but they exercise little or no initiative; rather they prefer to follow a program laid down for them. Emphasis on evangelism, teaching and preaching on the "security" of one's soul help give some a measure of stability. Of course the question of whether we have any right to impose such a program on the Africans or any people might well be asked at this point. Does Christianity to be Christian have to follow the pattern of American Christianity? Do our native churches have to be unreasonable facsimiles of the First Church in Ho-ho-kus, N. J.? Or will the Church of Christ be above cultural patterns? The African communists are accusing us of bringing a new form of slavery to Africa (and other parts of the world), that of "cultural imperialism." More than a grain of truth is present in that accusation.

Once Mvondo and Jack are known they respond more quickly because of our understanding of them. The more

quickly they listen to Salvation's truth; the more quickly they practice the experience of their salvation to those about them -- perhaps in ways which seem strange to us.

With a scientific knowledge of a non-Christian society and culture a new or older missionary need not be timid in working with his people; he needn't wait ten to fifteen years before he can be sure of his knowledge of them. (Even then one who is not trained can not be sure that he knows or ever will know his group). A trained person, however, can begin working with certainty a relatively short time after entering his field.

NOTES

1. Smith, Edwin W. "Anthropology and the Practical Man", Presidential address, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain, Vol. LXIV, January - June, 1934, p. xvi.

2. Horner, George R. "Child Training, The Mechanics of Culture Formation", Journal of the A.S.A., Dec. 1952. (It is suggested that this be read in addition to the present article, if available).

NOTES * NEWS * PEOPLE * PROJECTS

Elson at Cornell

Mr. Ben Elson is pursuing graduate work in general linguistics at Cornell University with a minor in cultural anthropology.

Eberscles Planning for Panay

Mr. and Mrs. Russell Ebersole are preparing for missionary work on the island of Panay, Philippines. They hope to do some work among the Negritos there.

Frizens Preparing for Philippines

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Frizen of Minneapolis, Minnesota are preparing for missionary work in the Philippines with the Far Eastern Gospel Crusade. They served for three years on the Home Staff of the Crusade.

Samuelson Takes Grigolia Course

Mr. Glenn Samuelson of Silver Spring, Maryland reports a revival of his interest in anthropology as a result of taking a summer school course entitled "Applied Anthropology for Ministers" taught by Dr. Alexander Grigolia at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Samuelsons are planning to enter the field of Christian Education.

New Journal for Evangelical Missionaries

Progressive missionaries will welcome the coming of the Journal of Evangelical Missions to be published in Mexico City by Thomas E. Fountain. The Journal will be a professional type magazine, devoted to the specific needs of home and foreign missionaries. Subjects to be handled in the articles are language study, Bible translation, missionary principles and methods, anthropology, evangelism, visual aids, literacy and education, journalism and literature, missionary medicine, sanitation, construction, photography, missionary family problems, devotional material, and biographical accounts of living missionaries whose work is significant. Significant news articles and Bible studies throwing new light

on missions will be included.

Loomis in Marshalls

Mr. Robert Loomis is preparing to revise the Marshallese Bible. He reports that the New Testament translation was translated phrase by phrase from the American Standard Version with little reference to the structure of the native language. Hence, many passages are either meaningless or incorrect.

Rosser Uses Anthropology

H. Edwin Rosser reports that the anthropological training received under Dr. Alexander Grigolia at Wheaton has been most helpful to him in his missionary work in Mexico. At the present time Mr. Rosser is teaching at the Presbyterian Seminary and supervising a Student Center. He is also working on his master's degree at the National Institue of Anthropology and History and plans to continue work toward a doctorate.

Anthropology in a Christian Highschool

Possibly the only Christian highschool ever to have had an anthropology course is Salem Academy, Salem, Oregon. For the year 1952-53 Mr. Curt Coe, now of Honolulu, was Dean of Men and head of the Science Department. Instead of the contemplated course in etiquette, Mr. Coe was permitted to offer a course in general anthropology. In spite of the fact that the class was one of the hardest working (if not the hardest working) in the school, the students proved to be very enthusiastic about the material.

Nussbaums Leave For Africa

Mr. and Mrs. (Loren and Mary) Nussbaum recently finished their linguistic work among the Popoluca Indians of Mexico. A survey of three Popoluca tribes was made to determine their Bible translation needs. In addition they have worked some on orthographies, grammars, dictionaries, a primer and some Gospel records.

The next step for the Nussbaums is work with the American Bible Society in Liberia, Africa, primarily in the program for aiding translators and revisers of the

Bible. They expect to arrive in Liberia on February 11, 1954.

New American Anthropological Association Members

Mr. David Winter, and Mr. Claude Stipe, both graduate students in anthropology at UCLA, have become members of the American Anthropological Association.

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